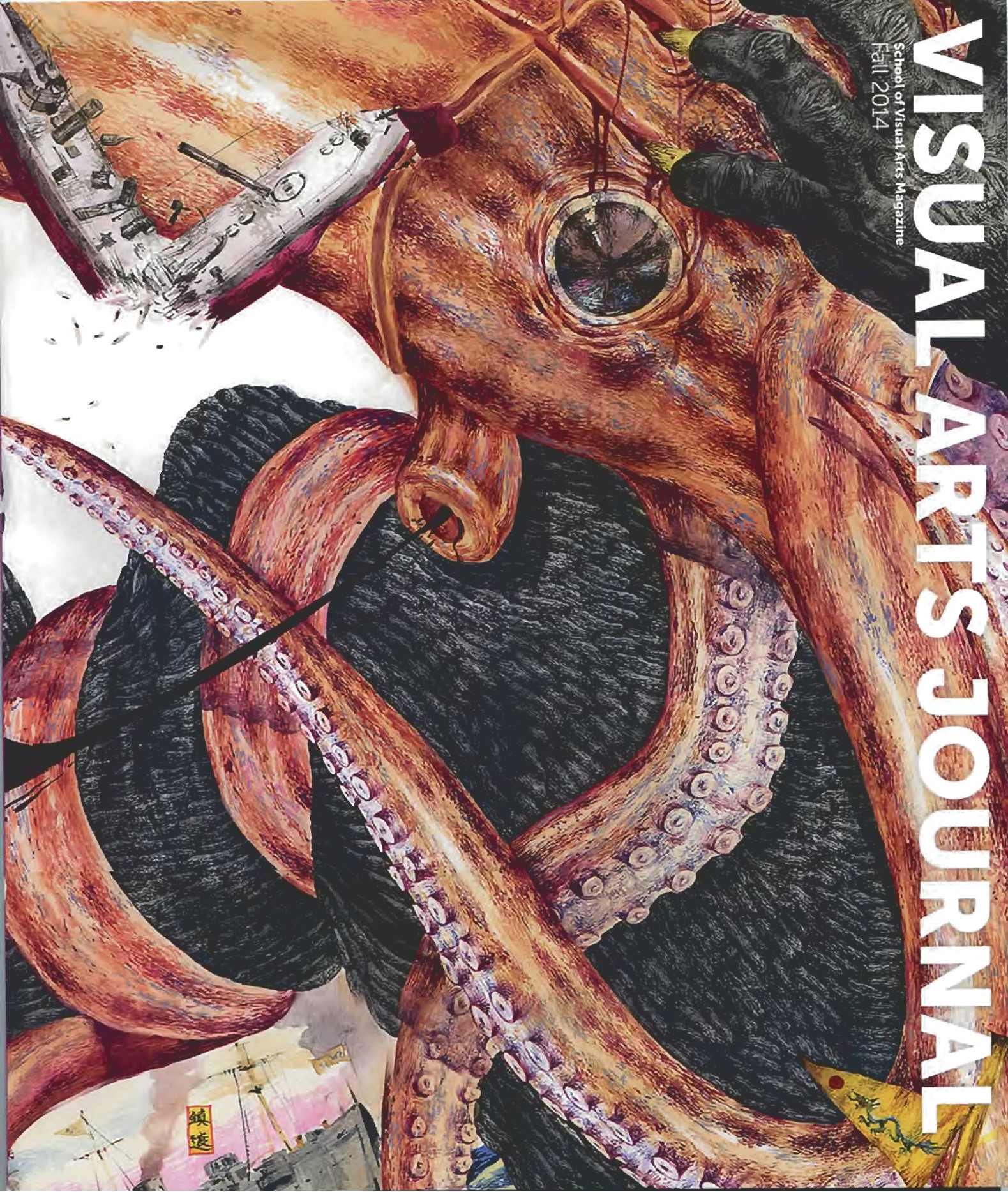


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## Marc Yankus

All photos courtesy of the artist and ClampArt, New York. © Marc Yankus

**Marc Yankus (BFA 1981 Illustration) uses a combination of photography and digital manipulation (including an effect he refers to as “a cloud sandwich”—more on that later) to create dramatic portraits of city buildings rich with a sense of history and the dreamlike quality of memory. Yankus’ compositions present his structures as massive, brooding entities even as he directs a viewer’s attention to cracks, crevices and such details as the ghostly remnants of long-demolished staircases. His fourth solo show, “The Space Between,” was on view from April 3 through May 17 at the ClampArt Gallery in New York. His work can also be seen on the covers of books by Philip Roth, Salman Rushdie, and others; on posters for Broadway shows such as August Wilson’s *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* and John Patrick Shanley’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Doubt*; and in the permanent collection of the Library of Congress.**

Yankus strips his building portraits of any real sense of place. Transformed into urban monoliths largely devoid of locational cues and pulled from time’s relentless flow, they do not feel linked to any specific era—not quite modern, but not quite frozen in the past either. His muted palette, which spans rust, sepia, ochre, cream and sand, with hints of sky blue (but not in the sky), recalls old photos or vintage postcards even as it evokes a contemporary narrative of urban isolation and anonymity. A single bird, so tiny it could be mistaken for a smudge on the background, flies by in an image of Goldman Sachs’ Jersey City building, as seen from the Hudson River; in another photo there might be a person visible at a window, but otherwise the viewer sees nothing alive.

As he strolls the streets of New York City, where he lives, Yankus says he frequently has an almost synesthetic visual experience, where everything around a building seems to disappear, presenting it as a potential subject that appears to him as flat as an image projected onto a screen. “I’m not drawn to all architecture,” he says; in fact, the buildings he is attracted to are “ones that you might walk by and not even notice. I don’t pick them because they’re unknown, I just like the way they

look. More ornate, decorative buildings are less interesting to me.” He doesn’t go on preplanned scouting trips, either, preferring to wait until a building reaches out and grabs his attention. Yankus will document its location on his iPhone and jot a few notes until he can come back to shoot it later.

Yankus photographs with a Canon 5D Mark 11, then imports the images onto his computer, using software to straighten out the image. Reluctant to reveal much about the specifics of how he works his magic, he says, “Basically, I try to bring the focus to the building. The only Photoshop filters I use are Sharpen and a painting technique combining some texture with clouds. I make a ‘cloud sandwich.’ Sometimes I reshape the buildings; other times I’ll do nothing and just leave the image as a straight photograph.” Asked to elaborate further, especially on what exactly a “cloud sandwich” is—he would only say, “There’s a fine line between documentation and fiction.”

In recent years, Yankus has undergone a natural transition to his current style, contrasting vast edifices of bricks in tack-sharp focus—delicate lines of mortar visible between every single one—with soft hazy areas of open sky. His previous work was more impressionistic in feel, blurry and softly focused overall. “My first experimental piece in a new direction was *Goldman Sachs*,” he says. “I took out some of the buildings alongside it that, for me, were distracting and ugly. It just happened; it wasn’t a conscious decision. I had never done that before—I always kept the integrity of the landscape—until I realized, why do I have this rule? Who says I can’t change my composition? I’m not only a photographer, I’m an artist, and I can experiment. I felt liberated and free when I took those buildings out.”

Looking to the future, Yankus says he would love to shoot the devastated buildings of Detroit. “From what I’ve seen in other photographs, it would be a really fascinating place to capture—before it’s completely gone.” The idea seems a perfect pairing of artist and subject matter. •





Marc Yankus, *The Space Between*, 2013, archival pigment print.





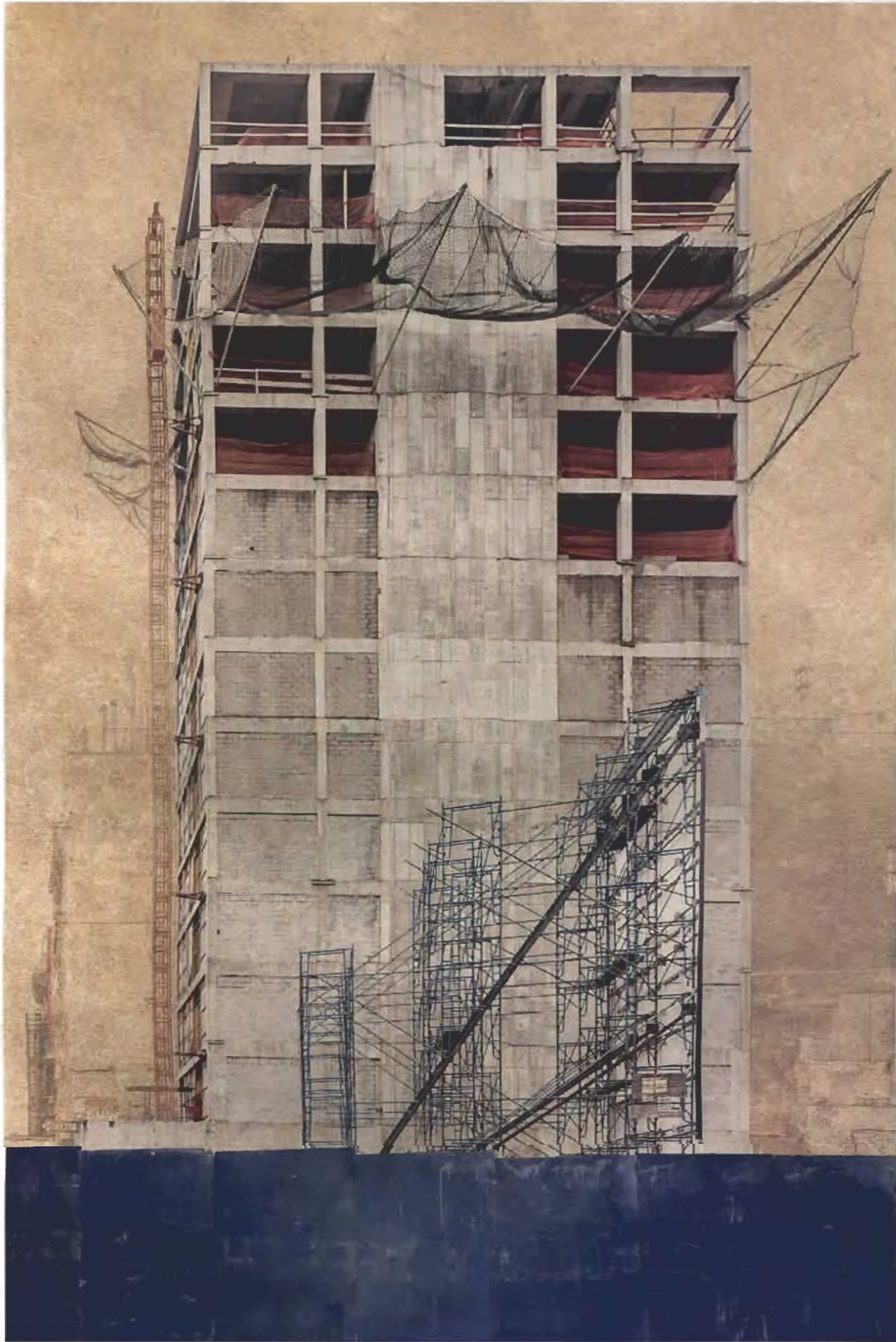
Marc Yankus, *Somewhere  
in the West Thirties*, 2013,  
archival pigment print.





Marc Yankus, *Three Blue Windows*, 2013, archival pigment print.

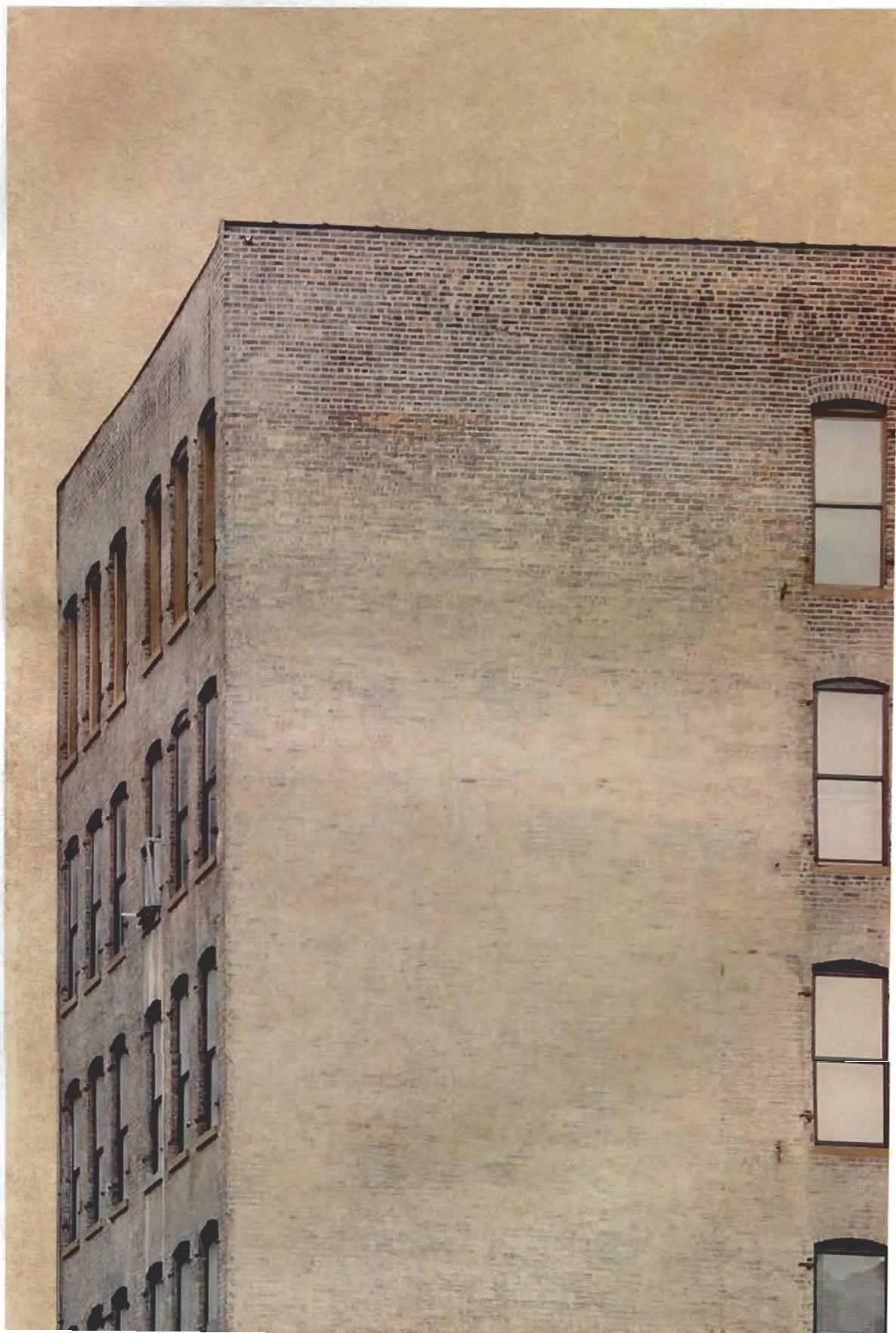




Marc Yankus, *Building Under Construction*, 2013, archival pigment print.



Marc Yankus, *Yellow Ochre Building*, 2013, archival pigment print.





Marc Yankus, *Building Split*, 2013, archival pigment print.



Marc Yankus, *Side of Building*, 2013,  
archival pigment print

